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WHAT OUGHT I TO DO? By George Trumbull Ladd. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1915. Pp. vii + 311.

This volume adds one to a rapidly growing list of books—books which furnish the ordinary intelligent reader with a simple yet authoritative exposition of the principles of a science, given in a small compass and with the least possible technicality. Such books should prove useful, and when, as in the present case, they are well and skillfully prepared, deserve hearty commendation. Professor Ladd is well-fitted to deal with problems of conduct; he writes out of full experience and can draw upon his more technical and elaborate ethical studies. The book is comprehensive in variety of topics discussed; wisdom is shown in the treatment of difficult moral problems; good judgment is displayed in the choice of illustrative material. One misses in a book of this sort the analytic division and subdivision of the subject-matter, with accompanying titles and sub-titles, which is a familiar feature of the text-book and formal treatise. Doubtless this is in some ways an advantage: the text-book arrangement, having the appearance of dry technicality, repels many readers. But the present form has also its drawbacks, I think; for the exposition of a science, no matter how informal, cannot well help being a reasoned argument and such an argument is much easier to follow when its successive steps are indicated by the typography.

The book is not uniform in quality. Some chapters are conspicuous by their excellence, while others are not as successful. Chapter VIII, entitled "Is There Only One Virtue?" is an instance of the former sort. This chapter is a model of what such exposition as the book aims at should be; it is remarkably clear and, because of the concrete manner of treatment, well-calculated to impress the mind of the lay reader. The author asks if it is possible to "unify" all the different virtues by reducing them to applications or aspects of a single principle. His conclusion is negative and this he enforces by considering what he regards as the three most notable principles for unifying the virtues that have been proposed in ethical reflection: Aristotle's conception of General Justice, the principle of Loyalty which reached its highest exaltation in feudal Japan, and the Christian conception of Benevolence. The discussion of these three types of ethical principle is illuminating, and carries conviction. Some other

chapters fall far below this standard. This is true—unfortunately—of the first two. The distinction made in the first chapter of the four groups of “thoughts, ideas, and emotions” implied in the constitution of moral obligation, is not convincing, and this is not on account of any palpable error, but because no pains is taken to show that it is inevitable in the logic of the moral situation. In these earlier chapters, particularly, the writing gives evidence of haste, and lack of careful revision. Sentences are occasionally encountered so involved in structure as to require a second reading to bring out their meaning. The following may serve as an example: “The doubts which try the soul and put it on the rack of conflicting tendencies and emotions, under a sky of cloudy ideas and confused thoughts, and sure to be connected with efforts of the honest enquirer into the one question which puts them up to him day after day—the question, What ought I to do?” (p. 50).

Professor Ladd’s ethical theory is, as we know, idealistic. Goodness he conceives in terms of self-conscious personality; the Moral Ideal is free personal development. “*The Moral Self in a process of development toward the Social Ideal*,—this complex of conceptions contains the whole domain of investigation for the student of ethics” (p. 257). With this general standpoint I find myself in hearty agreement, but the author’s formulation of it seems to me vitiated by an abstract conception of personality and personal satisfaction. Goodness he identifies with the satisfaction of the moral consciousness of man, and this he regards as qualitatively distinct from the satisfaction of his sentient nature, or *pleasure*. Now this comes dangerously near to founding morality upon the demands and deliverances of a special faculty or moral sense; certainly it does accept as final the distinction between the natural and the intellectual or spiritual self. But surely when man’s natural instincts and impulses are, through the action of intelligent choice, raised to the level of conscious desire, they are expressions of his personal will. In that case, their satisfaction is the satisfaction of man’s personal self and consequently possesses moral value. What then is personal satisfaction but the growing *system* of such natural satisfactions becoming more and more comprehensive and significant as personal development proceeds?

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